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METHODS OF PRACTICING

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The method of bestowing medical treatment seems to have changed progressively after first contact with the whites, the religious features becoming less and less pronounced and the features connected with the administration of the medicine more and more important.

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Adair's account of the performance among the Chickasaw in the middle of the eighteenth century is as follows:

"When the Indian physicians visit their supposed irreligious patients, they approach them in a bending posture, with their rattling calabash, preferring that sort to the North-American gourds: and in that bent posture of body, they run two or three times round the sick person, contrary to the course of the sun, invoking God as already exprest. Then they invoke the raven; and mimic his croaking voice . . . They also place a bason of cold water with some pebbles in it on the ground, near the patient, then they invoke the fish, because of its cool element, to cool the heat of the fever. Again, they invoke the eagle, (*Ooóle*) they solicit him as he soars in the heavens, to bring down refreshing things for their sick, and not to delay them, as he can dart down upon the wing, quick as a flash of lightning. They are so tedious on this subject, that it would be a task to repeat it: however, it may be needful to observe, that they chuse the eagle because of its supposed communicative virtues; and that it is according to its Indian name, a cherubimical emblem, and the king of birds, of prodigious strength, swiftness of wing, majestic stature, and loving its young ones so tenderly, as to carry them on its back, and teach them to fly.[93]

Of the Chickasaw of a later date we read:

"When they are sick, they send for a doctor, (they have several among them,) after looking at the sick a-while, the family leave him and the sick alone. He then commences singing and shaking a gourd over the patient. This is done, not to cure, but to find out what is the matter or disease: as the doctor sings several songs, he watches closely the patient, and finds out which song pleased: then he determines what the disease is: he then uses herbs, roots, steaming, and conjuring: the doctor frequently recommends to have a large feast: (which they call *Tonsh-pa-shoo-phah;*) if the Indian is tolerably well off, and is sick for two or three weeks, they may have two or three Tonsh-pa-shoo-phahs.[94] They eat, dance, and sing at a great rate,

[93] Adair, Hist. Am. Inds., pp. 173–174.

[94] Tonsh-pa-shoo-phah is ta·shi ăt pishofa, "the corn is hulled."

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at these feasts; the doctors say that it raises the spirits of the sick, and weakens the evil spirit.[95] 755

Today they call these dances by a shortened form of the name, Pishofa dances; they will be discussed at length in a subsequent paper.

The later Creek performance was much tamer than the ancient ritual. If a person were sick and his family knew what medicine to send for they did so; if not they got the physician's advice and procured the herbs, and other things he ordered. The pot was laid out for him with the medicine plants near it and beside all a cane for him to blow through, also a chair for him to sit in and a small gift to encourage him. Four root stalks or branches of the medicine were generally used, and in gathering these the doctor sometimes faced east and sometimes one of the other cardinal points in accordance with the nature of the remedy. Bark and branches were generally taken from the east sides of the trees. The medicine was piled into the pot at the direction of the physician, along with water, after which he blew into it through the cane four separate times after as many repetitions of a sacred fromula suited to the kind of disease which he supposed the patient had contracted. He came four successive mornings, allowing the gift to remain where it had been placed until the fourth, when he took it with him. This gift might be some cloth—perhaps 10 yards of calico—money, a handkerchief, or, if the doctor were a woman, a shawl. Money has been given only in late times.

The points of the compass are frequently named in these formulæ. The circuit is always sinistral or contraclockwise, and according to the best information I could get it usually begins with the north and ends with the east because the east is associated with life or the renewal of it. According to one informant, however, it ended with the south, and there may have been variations in the formulæ because the colors attached to these points are admitted to vary. One of my best informants stated that they were either: North (honeta), green; west (akálatkă), red; south (wahăla), black; and east (hăsosa), white; or else north, red; west, green; south, black; and east, white. The black is said to stand for the shade or something of that sort, but it does not seem natural that it should be to the south. The table following contains seven lists of colors applied to the cardinal points by several different bodies of Creeks, and a list from the Cherokee band of Natchez, obtained from several different authorities. 755 823 822

[95] Schoolcraft, Ind. Tribes, vol. 1, p. 316.

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	North	West	South	East
Chekilli, speech to Oglethorpe (Kasihta).	Red and yellow.	Black	Blue	White.[1]
Tuggle, Ms	Red	Yellow	Black	Do.[2]
Lasley Cloud, through F. Speck (Tuskegee).	Black	do	Red	Do.[3]
Big Jack (Hilibi)	Green	Red	Black	Do.
	Red	Green	do	Do.
Z. Cook (Tukabahchee)	Black	do	White	Red.
Silas Jefferson (Tuskegee)	Green	Black	Brown	Yellow.
Texas Alabama	Yellow	do	Red	White.
Watt Sam (Natchez)	do	do	do	Do.

[1] Gatschet, Creek Mig. Leg., vol. I, p. 245.
[2] Ms., Bur. Amer. Ethn.
[3] Mem. Am. Anth. Assn., vol. II, p. 23.

Here red and yellow is each applied to the north in three lists, and black and green in two; black is applied to the west in four lists, yellow and green in two each, and red in one; black is applied to the south in three cases, brown in one, red in three, and blue and white in one each; white is applied to the east in seven cases and yellow and red in one each. In conjuring for the dog disease the cardinal points were faced in the same order as that first given, ending with the east, but no colors were mentioned. In others neither the points nor the colors occurred. When he blew into the medicine, however, the doctor almost always faced east. An Alabama doctor would sing one verse of the medicine formula and call upon the north, sing another and call upon the west, sing a third and call upon the south, and sing a fourth and call upon the east. Then he would blow into the medicine and do the same thing again, passing around the circuit four times and blowing into the medicine after each circuit. Afterwards the patient was given some medicine to drink, and, wetting the ends of his fingers in it, the doctor rubbed some on the patient's ears, arms, legs, breast, and in fact his whole body. The north was referred to as the "yellow water," the west as "the black water," the south as "the red water," and the east as "the white water," and they were enumerated in that order, as in the table above.

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According to my Natchez informant, himself a medicine man, the sick person must be laid with his head to the east. It was like administering poison, he affirmed, to turn the heads of the sick in any other direction, because "the east meant long life and good fortune while the west meant short life." Bark, roots, and other portions of trees or bushes which entered into the remedies were taken from the east side. If a person became weak and emaciated, his name might be changed.

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Blood letting and sucking were frequently resorted to. Swan says that the Indians sometimes believed that they had been supernaturally shot by enemies hundreds of miles away and would then consult a doctress. "The cunning woman tells them that what they have apprehended is verily true, and proceeds to examine and make the cure. In these cases, scratching or cupping is the remedy; or, as is often the case, sucking the affected part with her mouth, she produces to their view some fragment of a bullet, or piece of a wad, which she had purposely concealed in her mouth to confirm the truth of what she had asserted; after this, a few magic draughts of their physic must be administered, and the patient is made whole."[96] Jackson Lewis said that pricks were sometimes made over the affected part with a little piece of glass. The large end of a short piece of cow horn was then placed over them and a quantity of blood sucked out through a hole pierced in the small end. Silas Jefferson states that he was once treated by a snake doctor who simply chewed up a bit of root and, holding it in his mouth, sucked out the poison. Next day he was perfectly restored. But unlike the former European practice, blood letting was not resorted to in cases of fever.[97]

Eakins says that bandages and lints were applied in many cases. He continues: "The success with which they treat gunshot wounds, cuts, &c., is generally attributed to the care of the physician. The Creeks never amputate. They are skilful in the use of splints. For removing the wounded they use the litter."[97]

Adair furnishes some information regarding the treatment of those wounded in war.

"The Indians . . . build a small hut at a considerable distance from the houses of the village, for every one of their warriors wounded in war, and confine them there . . . for the space of four moons, including that moon in which they were wounded, as in the case of their women after travail: and they keep them strictly separate, lest the impurity of the one should prevent the cure of the other. The reputed prophet, or divine physician, daily pays them a due attendance, always invoking Yo He Wah to bless the means they apply on the sad occasion; which is chiefly mountain allum, and medicinal herbs, always injoyning a very abstemious life, prohibiting them women and salt in particular, during the time of the cure, or sanctifying the reputed sinners. Like the Israelites, they firmly believe that safety, or wounds, etc., immediately proceed from the pleased, or angry deity, for their virtuous, or vicious conduct, in observing, or violating the divine law.

"In this long space of purification, each patient is allowed only a superannuated woman to attend him, who is past the temptations of

[96] Schoolcraft, Ind. Tribes, vol. v, p. 271. [97] Ibid., vol. i, p. 274.

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752 727 783 sinning with men, lest the introduction of a young one should either seduce him to folly; or she having committed it with others—or by not observing her appointed time of living apart from the rest, might thereby defile the place, and totally prevent the cure. But what is yet more surprising in their physical, or rather theological regimen, is, that the physician is so religiously cautious of not admitting polluted persons to visit any of his patients, lest the defilement should retard the cure, or spoil the warriors, that before he introduces any man, even any of their priests, who are married according to the law, he obliges him to assert either by a double affirmative, or by two negatives, that he has not known even his own wife, in the space of the last natural day." [8]

756 In earlier times it is said that the doctors claimed to have intercourse with good or bad spirits, but this personal side of the influences which they controlled appears to have gradually fallen out so that they were later of a general magic nature rather than through personal assisting spirits.

● 755 The "white day" and the "white smoke" were expressions used in medical formulæ or incantations. It is said that the term "white day" was specifically applied to the treatment given to a man [752 727] wounded in war because by "giving him the white day" the doctor was prolonging his life. Two Creeks told General Hitchcock that doctors sometimes prescribed gifts to the tcokofa as a means of cure. This suggests a sanctity connected with that building similar to the sanctity attaching to the Natchez temple.

756 "If the physician fails in his cure," says Swan, "he will ascribe it to the cats or dogs that may be about the house; and they are either killed instantly, or sent out of the neighborhood. If after all the patient dies, the chance is two to one that the doctor is considered as a witch or sorcerer, influenced by the devil, and is pursued, beaten, and sometimes killed by the surviving relations; but if successful in restoring the patient to health, he is paid almost his own price for his services, in skins or cattle." [1] This dangerous side of shamanism is noted by Bossu and other writers and mentioned by some of my informants. [2]

755 515 Another method of doctoring was by sweat baths. These were generally taken in a small lodge composed of blankets thrown over a framework of slender poles. When prepared to take a sweat bath they heated stones, carried them into the lodge and threw on them water which had first been doctored by being blown into through a cane. Some Indians were taking sweat baths regularly as late as 1914.

756 791 Doctors sometimes engaged in supernatural fights with one another. Upon one occasion a doctor showed his power by throwing his hand-

[8] Adair, Hist. Am. Inds., p. 135.
[1] Schoolcraft, Ind. Tribes, vol. v, p. 271.
[2] Bossu, Nouv. Voy., vol. II, p. 59.

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pected by a soft ear, to have been sufficient to drive out the devil if he lay anywhere hid in the house. When I afterward asked him the name, and the reason of such a strange method of diversion, he told me the dance was called *Keetla Ishto Hoollo*, 'a dance to, or before, the great holy one;'[5] that it kept off evil spirits, witches, and wizards, from the red people; and enabled them to ordain elderly men to officiate in holy things, as the exigency of the times required.

"He who danced to it, kept his place and posture, in a very exact manner, without the least perceivable variation: yet by the prodigious working of his muscles and nerves, he in about half an hour, foamed in a very extraordinary manner, and discontinued it proportionally, till he recovered himself."[6]

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The Indians were and still are satisfied that their system of doctoring is vastly superior to that used by the whites, but the system of white doctoring with which the Indians were formerly familiar can not be said to represent upon the whole a very perfect development of the medical art, and there has been more than one occasion for them to complain like the Chickasaw of Adair's time of the performances of "civilized" surgeons. The success of native remedies was due in part without doubt to the real medicinal virtues of the plants used, in part to the good effects of such a simple assistant as sweat bathing, and perhaps to a greater extent to the power of suggestion. Swan was, however, quite right in saying that the results were not ascertain as had commonly been reported.[7]

WEATHER CONTROLLERS

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Besides the healers there were men and women who professed to be able to cause rain or drought, to blow away the clouds, or "blow the rain" as they described it. When a storm was coming up an Alabama doctor would blow into his clasped hands, rub them together, and then wave them upward and outward. Then, even if it rained, the wind would not blow. The same person claimed to be able to cause rain or drought.

Hitchcock says: "There are people who affect to think they can make it rain and they go to a piece of shallow water and roll and wallow in the muddy water every morning for four mornings in succession. They have a pot of medicine in one hand and a buffalo tail in the other and sing continually for an hour or more. During this time they take black drink every morning."[8]

He also gives some interesting particulars regarding the meteorological activities of Megillis Hadjo, the prophet or kĭla of Tukabah-

[5] Hĭla ishto holo, "dance of the spirit or spirits"; hila, "dance"; ishto, "big"; holo, what is "holy, sacred," or "supernatural."

[6] Adair, Hist. Am. Inds., p. 175.

[7] Schoolcraft, Ind. Tribes, vol. v, p. 271.

[8] Hitchcock, Ms. notes.